

Hotel Booking

Note-taking exercise

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Introduction

Note-taking is a key skill in any industry that relies on communication.

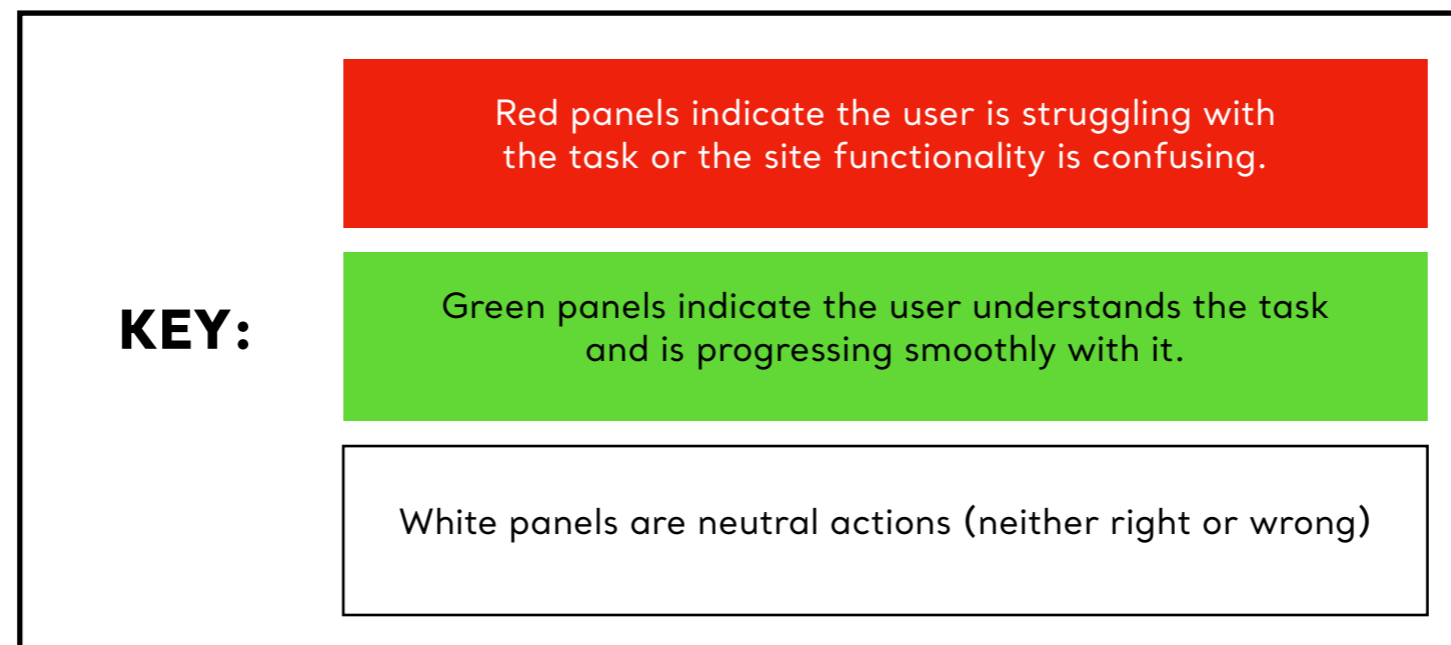
As a copywriter, I've presented concepts to clients, many of whom later need to share them with other stakeholders.

It's important they can recall the salient points when sharing the ideas with their colleagues. To ensure this, I write a rationale or create short, concise notes they can refer to.

This exercise isn't about explaining, it's about cultivating detached observation and recording accurately.

The aim is to capture users' goals, note their actions and reactions, spot those parts of the exercise they find easy, and those they struggle with.

This can then help a range of stakeholders evaluate whether their hotel booking experience is helpful or a hindrance.



Task outlines

Task One

Users are asked to imagine the following scenario, and then book a hotel based on it:

They're planning a summer break for the following year.

Along with their partner, they'll be staying in Barcelona for a week.

The dates are June 12th - 19th.

They want a hotel that's located in the heart of Barcelona, but also near to the seafront.

They're looking for a double room, ideally with a breakfast included.

They also want a hotel that lets them pay on arrival, with an ability to cancel the room, if needed.

The site they're to use to find a room with this criteria is Barcelo.com

Task Two

Users are asked to imagine the following scenario to guide their next booking:

They're planning a long weekend in London for the following April

They'll be travelling with a friend, so want a twin room from Friday to Monday.

They can choose the second or third weekend in April.

There's no preference over the area of London where they want to stay.

They're looking for a twin room, ideally with breakfast included.

The site they're to use to find a room with this criteria is DoyleCollection.com

User profile: Noleen

Background

Noleen is an Administration Manager living in Celbridge, County Kildare, the Republic of Ireland.

She accesses the internet at home and work. At home, in the evenings. But mostly at work during lunch. She uses both her PC and phone to get online.

She mainly browses news websites and is 'always on Amazon'. She mentions other sites: 'LivingSocial' and 'Different Deal'. These are offer / voucher sites (like Groupon and Wowcher).

A regular, monthly treat

Noleen and her husband treat themselves to a hotel stay every month. They like hotels with nice restaurants.

She first checks a hotel's own website, then looks it up on **Booking.com** and **TripAdvisor**. Noleen trusts both sites and uses them to check the prices, before ringing the hotel directly to ask if they could match the best price.

Online booking experience

Noleen regularly books online. Prior to the user test, she last booked a hotel called Faithlegg, a week before lockdown. She found it 'a very easy website to use, very clear' and mentioned that she liked being able to add extras to their stay.

She tried booking a hotel on the day of the user test: Burtown House. She found it a 'terrible site to use. Very old. Very clunky.'

Noleen: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 1: Searching on barcelo.com

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
12"36'	User begins by searching for barcelo.com via Google. She clicks the link in the results.
13"08'	User doesn't wait for the homepage to fully load. Opens the menu and looks for 'hotels with beach'. Realises it's too broad as it's showing multiple destinations, not just Barcelona.
13"31'	User types Barcelona into the search field.
13"41'	User looks through the suggested categories that appear and clicks on 'Adults only'.
13"48'	User sees listed Hotels. Although she's been to Barcelona previously, she'd like to see them on a map as she says: "I'm not great on the geography of it."
14"36'	User enters dates for her stay. A message asks her to select a hotel first. When she clicks on 'select hotel' it reloads the homepage. She has to enter Barcelona again.
14"53'	User states she'd like to enter the dates first to see what's available. This would show all hotels in the group, not just those in Barcelona.
15"03'	User begins her search again and enters Barcelona in the destination field.

Noleen: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 1: Searching on barcelo.com

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
15"41'	User comments that she doesn't like the calendar function: "Don't want to be scrolling month to month... which isn't great." She has to make many clicks before she reaches her dates.
16"24'	User clicks on 'Discount' tab to see if there are any discounts available. There aren't.
16"45'	User has entered her destination, dates and people travelling. Clicks 'Search'. The results load.

Noleen: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 2: Viewing results and choosing a room

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
16"55'	User looks over the search results. Comments that she likes seeing the TripAdvisor ratings.
17"03'	"Reviews, price... it's clear. Where do I put in 'beach?" She's looking for a way to filter results that's not there.
17"15'	User spots 'See map' and opens it. Spends several seconds viewing the map before clicking the hotel closest to the beach. She reads the preview panel and mentions the TripAdvisor rating.
17"45'	User clicks on the link that's the hotel's name. Spots the reviews and says she'd read one or two.
18"00'	Reads the hotel description for further confirmation that it's near the beach. "It has enough of a description."
18"17'	When asked to elaborate on what she's looking for she mentions facilities like a pool and restaurant.
18"48'	User looks through the photo gallery on the hotel's page. These are 'very important' and that a lack of photos would seem "dubious, like the hotel was hiding something" .
19"25'	Comments that she'd like another tab in the hotel's navbar showing what local attractions are nearby.

Noleen: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 3: Booking a room with breakfast included

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
19"48	She begins the booking process.
20"07'	She pauses to read the 'My Barcelo' lightbox that appears. She says that she'd join it to claim the 10% discount.
21"19'	She's clicked on 'Book' and is on the 'Select Room' page. The first thing she mentions is 'add-ons'. She then confirms the dates are correct.
21"37'	She looks at the available rooms. Comments that she doesn't like having to scroll to see what's available.
22"22'	She picks the 'Deluxe Premium' room and clicks 'Book now'. It takes a while to load and she asks if this is a deliberate part of the test.
23"17'	Her chosen room loads. The moderator asks her to add breakfast. As she scrolls down the page, she states "there's too much screen" .
24"13'	She locates breakfast and adds it to her booking.

Noleen: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 3: Booking a room with breakfast

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
25"34'	In the list of extras, there's an option to reserve a double bed. The Moderator asks her about this. She can't work out what this options means. Nowhere is it stated that it's a twin room, or has two beds.
26"24'	She mentions that nowhere has she seen anything about 'free cancellation'. She says she wouldn't normally get this far in the process without knowing she had the ability to cancel her booking if circumstances changed.

NOLEEN - BARCELO.COM SUMMARY

"It's a little bit clunky." When asked to elaborate, she mentions that she usually books her breaks **'a little bit quicker'**. This is likely due to her being familiar with other websites she regularly mentioned.

She'd rather book a room with free cancellation, then go back for to add on any extras for her stay.

Even though she doesn't need to complete the form, she states that because there's no cancellation option, she wouldn't go through to payment.

She doesn't comment on the website's design or copy.

Noleen: Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Homepage and room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
30"29'	Noleen begins by searching for The Doyle Collection via Google. It appears first, and she clicks the link.
30"47'	The homepage makes a good impression with her. "It's a lovely page." She likes the design, and comments on the photography. She finds the layout more intuitive than the previous site.
31"17'	While opening the burger menu, she comments that it's 'telling you more about the hotel' . It's not clear what she's referring to: the menu, the photography or website's design.
32"05'	While considering the menu options she notices the hotels are divided into 'Luxury' and 'Urban'. She spots those listed under 'London'. She see that her cursor doesn't change when she hovers on 'London' so clicks on a hotel - The Kensington.
32"22'	She sees a promotion and decides to click on it even though she thinks it won't suit her dates. The offer isn't available.
33"47'	When she goes back to search for a hotel, she gets confused by the burger menu.
34"07'	She goes back to the hotel page and clicks on 'Book your stay'. The booking menu that appears is "what I actually expect" .

Noleen: Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Homepage and room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
34"23'	She comments that, even though she has to flick through the months on the calendar it's easier than the previous site. When quizzed why, she replies that it's "instant" .
35"26'	Noleen's happy to see pictures of the room, but is concerned they're cropped too tightly. "I'd think this was a very small room."
35"43'	She spots the Twin Room. It's taken the best part of two minutes for her to search and find the room she needs. Even though she finds it, she scrolls through the other options.
36"09'	She clicks on the room expecting to see more photos of it. The panel expands, and there's only one photo available.
36"17'	She comments on the room amenities that are listed. In particular, she mentions the coffee machine and toiletries. "That is important."

Noleen: Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 2: Booking a twin room with breakfast included

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
36"59	When asked to expand on what's important, she replies ' the room size '. It's not as important to her as it is her husband. The coffee machine and TV with Netflix are important to her. She notes there's no bathrobe mentioned.
38"56'	She now checks the room rate and notes it's ' the best flexible rate '. She spots 'free cancellation'.
39"09'	She notices that the two room rates shown are exactly the same. She can't work out why this is.
40"39'	She's about to click on 'Book room' when the Moderator asks her what 'Personalise your stay' may mean. "Robes, slippers, flowers." She comments she'd like to see some more offers that would be relevant to her, like a discount for the restaurant or on an Oyster card.
42"38'	She realises that it's not been confirmed if breakfast is included. She wonders if it's an extra that will appear after clicking on 'Book room'.
42"55'	The Moderator asks if the booking she's about to make includes breakfast. 'I don't recall' I don't see breakfast anywhere. Don't remember clicking anything for breakfast.'

Noleen: Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 2: Booking a twin room with breakfast included

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
44"13'	The booking page loads. There's no mention of a breakfast.
43"56'	User presumes clicking on 'book now' will confirm breakfast.
44"18'	When the booking confirmation page loads, the moderator confirms this is the end of the session.

NOLEEN - DOYLE COLLECTION SUMMARY

She preferred this to Barcelo.com citing the layout: **'It's more similar to ones I would use.'**

She'd prefer to see a more concise layout that reduces scrolling. (That said, she scrolled more than necessary on several pages.)

She liked the clarity about what's included in the final package.

She mentions free cancellation again, based on her experiences with booking.com She also mentions booking.com for its functionality.

She didn't like that the offer didn't show the applicable dates upfront.

She'd like **'More pictures of the rooms'** and mentions being able to take a virtual tour of rooms.

She'd double-check the hotel on TripAdvisor.

User profile: Nicole

Background

Nicole is an Account Manager for an IT firm. She lives in Dublin.

She uses the internet 'a lot' - from her phone 'while walking around' and also from her computer at home.

The most common sites she uses are Google, LinkedIn, Booking.com, airbnb, shopping sites, news.

A well-travelled subject

Nicole loves staying in hotels for travel, special occasions, birthdays, meeting friends. Sometimes she has to book them for work/colleagues. She estimates it's a 70-30 leisure / business split.

In the past few years, she's travelled in Ireland, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Bali, England, and Spain. When asked how she booked these trips, she replies she uses booking.com, airbnb and hotels.ie She likes booking.com for its Genius club membership, which gives her a 10% discount on hotels and trips.

Online booking experience

Prior to the user test, Nicole last booked a hotel for her partner's birthday. She took advantage of a deal for the Four Seasons in Dublin and booked online for dinner, bed & breakfast. She explained that there were lots of deals available, but it was the hotel's reputation which swung it for them. 'For that price, five star doesn't come around that often.'

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 1: Searching on barcelo.com

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
10"22'	User begins by typing barcelo.com into the URL bar.
11"01'	When the site loads, she types 'Barcelona, Spain' into the search bar.
11"28'	She spends a few moments looking at the hotel suggestions that load, then clicks on the first one. She's not seen the full list of available hotels.
12"29'	She says ' it's just the one hotel ' and seems a little surprised that there aren't more hotels showing. A moment later she says " I was expecting to see a list of hotels ".
12"46'	Despite realising that she's not seeing the search results she wanted, she spots the TripAdvisor rating which is " pretty impressive ". She comments favourably on the autoplay photo gallery.
12"58'	She scans the hotel description and comments " ...it doesn't let me see...more in the city. " She's not spotted the map tab.
13"27'	Moderator prompts her by asking how she'd find it if it was near the beach. She replies by quoting from the copy that says the hotel is ' next to Las Ramblas ' - referring to a city centre location, not a seafront one.

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 1: Searching on barcelo.com

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
13"45'	She spots the map tab and says about the hotel: "it's not too far away from the beach" . Comments favourably on the map layout.
14"39'	She clicks on the hotel's facilities tab. The Moderator asks her what she'd look for. She replies "pool, amenities, spa, bar, airport collection... feedback"
16"06'	Moderator prompts her by saying that there is a hotel by the sea. How would she go about finding it?
16"12'	She searches again. She inputs Barcelona sea, then changes sea to beach. She seems uncertain about how to quickly find a hotel by the sea.
16"39'	In the search results, she spots a hotel with 'beach' mentioned, but then realises it's in Bulgaria. Concedes "I've no idea" .
16"46'	User now opens 'hotels' from the main site's drop-down menu and clicks on Barcelona in 'hotels by destination'.
16"50'	After clicking Barcelona, a list of all the site's hotels in that city loads. User wonders "maybe if I clicked in activities" .
17"05'	User struggles to work out how to find hotels close to the beach. She doesn't see the tab with 'See map' as a filter. She admits 'I'd probably just read through them all' .

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 1: Searching on barcelo.com

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
17"14'	User spots 'on the sea front' in a description from the list of hotels.
17"27'	As the hotel page loads, she clicks on the map tab to confirm its location. "That looks a lot closer, but it's a little bit further out from the city" .
17"12'	She goes back to look at the list of search results.
17"58'	She scrolls through the list. Moderator prompts her to return to the last hotel she clicked on.
18"50'	Moderator asks what else she'd look at before deciding to book that hotel. "I think just all of the photos, the reviews, what the transport has to offer, and I think airport services is important as well."

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 2: Viewing results and choosing a room

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
19"33'	User is asked how she'd go about booking a suitable room. Spends 18 seconds scanning the first three rooms that appear on the screen.
20"06'	She chooses 'Deluxe with sea view' room. Says she likes to 'book something that's not always the standards' (ie, upgrading for a treat).
20"20'	She spends a few moments looking through the photo gallery of the room she's selected. She then examines the amenities listed as coming with the room.
20"33'	Moderator asks her which amenities are important. "Fridge and coffee maker. Hairdryer, I always check. Air con, and heating in case it's cold." She also mentions 'music', but doesn't reference the iPod docking station mentioned in the list.
21"08'	Moderator asks her about room size, specifically how it's shown as 27 square metres. "I wouldn't have a clue. It looks quite small, that's the only thing I've noticed."
21"39'	The Moderator prompts her to go ahead and book the room. A few seconds later, she realises there's been no mention of an included breakfast.
21"50'	After realising there's no breakfast included she goes back to the room listings to look for a mention of breakfast.

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 2: Viewing results and choosing a room

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
22"02'	After considering the room listings, she says 'I don't think any of them have breakfast.' She clicks the hotel again.
22"12'	She scrolls around the hotel's page and clicks on the hotel's 'Facilities' tab. She looks at the 'Cuisine' section. After 11 seconds she asks "I wonder if it's included."
22"28'	User is scrolling around quickly. She fails to miss a link at the page bottom under FAQs that reads 'Is breakfast at the Occidental Atenea Mar - Adults Only included in the guest's accommodation?'
23"02'	Nicole can't find any mention of an included breakfast and wonders 'maybe you'd have to organise breakfast when you get there' .
23"11'	She clicks to book a room. She's spent a total of 81 seconds scrolling and clicking on tabs in search of a breakfast option with no success.

Nicole: Task 1 - Barcelo.com

Step 3: Booking a room with breakfast included

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
23"36'	User realises her check-out date is incorrect. She tries to adjust it, but the calendar also changes her check-in date forcing her to refresh the page and start again.
23"48'	Nicole is confirming her dates to book the Deluxe Room with sea view. In the bottom right of the screen, a yellow box appears saying '6 people booked in the last 24 hours'.
24"09'	Moderator asks if she usually types in dates or uses the calendar. She replies that she usually uses the calendar as she finds it helpful to visualise time.
25"26'	Nicole's had to refresh the page and attempt new calendar entries ten times before she's able to enter her dates. She states that this would make her consider leaving the site and finding another. In total, it's almost two full minutes before Nicole is able to enter correct dates.
25"50'	The page loads showing her room with the correct dates. She clicks 'view more rates' and finally spots options to 'pay now' and 'pay at hotel' with bed and breakfast.
26"15'	Nicole looks through the add-ons. 'It's a bit much, right away' . When asked to clarify this, she states that it gets in the way of booking. She'd rather see extras after the room's booked.
27"06'	When asked if there's anything in the extras she'd include, she wonders why there's an option to book a double bed. When asked to clarify, she thinks that the room has two single beds and that 'it's a bit sly' . The Moderator announces the end of this test.

NICOLE - BARCELO.COM SUMMARY

When asked what she thought of the experience, Nicole mentions the confusion about the double bed, especially as there wasn't a mention of two single beds.

She thought there was a lot missing - add-ons and breakfast appearing after deciding to book a room. She'd like to see what's available as she was booking. (This contradicts what she said about having extras *before* a booking 'getting in the way'.)

When asked 'Other than breakfast, was there anything else you expected to see, but didn't?' Nicole mentions features of the stay and the room.

No commentary on the hotel's site, design, functionality and utility.

Nicole Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
32"27'	When asked to describe her initial impression, she replies that the first image was ' classy and rich '. As the images change, she comments that some make the navigation hard to see. Overall she finds they convey ' superior '.
33"01'	Begins searching for a room. First clicks 'hotels' from the main nav. It loads 'Luxury Hotels'. She then spots 'Book your room' in the top-right corner. Clicks and looks at the drop-down menu.
33"16'	Says it would be easier if there was an option to pick a country in the navigation. Only individual hotels are clickable.
33"28'	She opens the drop-down menu and selects The Kensington.
34"00'	She comments ' it would be easier if they showed me a little glimpse of all three '. She realises she has to click in and out of each hotel.
34"37'	When asked how she'd know which hotel she'd want, she replies she'd need to click a hotel, view the twin room, then find the same room in the next hotel. Says that she'd have to make notes.
35"00'	She mentions ' I always filter ' as it means she doesn't have to scroll as much. She doesn't like scrolling around. She prefers to click on what she needs. This is functionality from sites like Trivago and booking.com

Nicole **Task 2** - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
35"46'	She says that 'it doesn't look like they have a twin room' She's scrolled up and down the page twice and missed the 'Classic Room Twin Bed' that appears second.
35"57'	She clicks on Family Room to see if that offers separate beds then Luxury Studio Suite. Neither are suitable.
36"25'	Her cursor is placed over the Classic Room Twin Bed option as she admits "it's hard to find a twin room" .
36"32'	She clicks on the Classic Room Twin Bed option.
36"37'	She's asked what she thinks Classic Room Twin Bed means and replies "a standard room with two beds." Spends 20 seconds reading the description. It mentions 'duck down duvet' - singular, not plural - by a photo of a double bed.
37"10'	Clicks on 'rates' for Classic Room Twin Bed. Wonders if 'maybe I'd have to just book one of these rooms' .
37"20'	She asks 'is a twin room meaning just two beds?' The Moderator confirms that it does.

Nicole **Task 2** - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
37"35'	She spots that the 'best flexible rate' is the same for both booking options and finds it confusing.
37"53'	After 18 seconds she says she can't really work it out.
38"21'	She clicks on the first of the two rates shown. She's spent 46 seconds trying to understand the rates.
38"51'	She's reminded herself that the criteria is 'pay later'. She leans in to study the payment screen but says she can't find a way to pay later. This takes 30 seconds.
38"59'	'This is a lot more confusing than the last website'
39"37'	Mentions she'd normally see a summary of what she was going to get. Wonders 'what am I signed up to?' She misses the summary of her booking on the left-hand side of the page.
40"03'	Nicole contradicts herself about not having a summary as she quotes the price shown in the summary panel. She's spent 26 seconds scrolling around.
40"13'	She clicks back as she has to go through the same process for the other hotels.

Nicole Task 2 - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
40"28'	She clicks into 'Book your stay' to begin the process for the next hotel.
40"32'	Clicks on The Marylebone. Loads the calendar easily. Reiterates she'd like to see a price (comparison for all three) to help her decide. Enters her dates again.
41"04'	The list of rooms loads and she clicks on the first one - Classic Twin 2 Single Beds.
41"28'	She's clicked 'view rates'. A number of options and price points appear. She looks at ones that mention 'breakfast included'.
42"14'	After looking through the various packages on offer she clicks 'Weekends in Style' which is the cheapest option with breakfast included. She notes that there's champagne included and it's cheaper.
42"30'	Moderator comments that she's not looked at facilities or all the hotels themselves.
43"00'	She accidentally clicks back, but the hotels overview page has a clickable gallery for each hotel which she'd like to see on each room.
43"10'	She's scrolls up and down the rooms page.

Nicole **Task 2** - doylecollection.com

Step 1: Room search

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
43"23'	When asked about the importance of photos she replies 'Really important. You can really visualise how small it is. I can't see much so can't judge the room size. I like multiple photos. They're not showing me enough' .
44"00'	A moment after being asked how she'd see more photos of the rooms, she discovers that there are clickable galleries in the Marylebone's room panels. "They're still not great'. Not showing much. They're tiny. They're hiding something."
44"20'	When asked what she'd like to see in the photos, she says: 'The bathroom. If there's a desk. View from the window. Wardrobe space. Even just a dresser for makeup.'
46"04'	The moderator has asked her what's important to see in the room details. She lists a number of things, and then comments on how well laid out the room amenities are listed in the room she's looking at. It 'feels more luxurious.'
46"30'	The Moderator asks her to book a room.
47"05'	She scrolls around for almost 30 seconds before saying "This is kind of hard to book." Five minutes before, she managed to get to the booking page of this very room. She misses the panel on the left-hand side with her previous booking still in place.

Nicole **Task 2** - doylecollection.com

Step 2: Booking a twin room with breakfast

TIME	USER ACTION / QUOTES
47"33'	"I can't find any way to book this if I wanted this one."
47"44'	She clicks on 'Book your stay' as if to start the process from the beginning again.
47"52'	She then remembers that booking is behind the link 'see all rates' and clicks it. (It still takes a further click to load the rates.)
48"11'	Moderator asks her what 'personalise your stay' may mean. "Oh, God! Maybe... I've no idea."
48"25'	She clicks on 'See details' and the room rates per night are shown.
48"50'	She clicks on Book Now. The Moderator announces that the test is over.

DOYLE COLLECTION - NICOLE SUMMARY

"I thought it looked classier... but I had to do a lot of rooting around to find what I was looking for. The other was a lot easier."

"I don't know how confident I feel. Too little steps." (Assumption that she's referring to there being not enough confirmations and details).

She mentioned that she'd like to see a summary of what she's getting before she pays. She missed the summary panel that remained after she first booked a room.

She'd like to see an overview of London (where the hotels are on a map) rather than having to click individual hotels.

Wants a snapshot comparison of the three hotels.

She was surprised that the drop-down menu was the only way to view all the hotels. "Not a lot around the exact location. Wasn't clear about city centre hotel." Would welcome a map view.